



FSA*Now*

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Flexiplace Works

COO Terri Shaw has released the recently-completed Alternative Work Schedule (AWS) and Flexiplace study. The report says existing guidelines provide FSA managers sufficient authority to manage the performance risks that AWS and Flexiplace pose and use of the programs should be regularly evaluated in light of changing workloads.

The report was the work of a chartered employee "task force" led by Kathleen McWhirter of the COO's office. The current state of Flexiplace was investigated, looking at existing Flexiplace and AWS agreements and using the ED Personnel Management Office, FSA Human Resources, and channel and office heads as reference sources.

According to the report, instead of hindering

employee performance, AWS and Flexiplace create greater job satisfaction among employees, increasing morale and motivation, and decreasing rates of absenteeism. The agreements allow employees more freedom to accomplish their assigned duties while still working towards FSA's goals.

Individual AWS and Flexiplace schedule management is left to the discretion of managers, as managers are held accountable for meeting their organizations' goals that contribute to successfully completing the action items in the FY03 Performance Plan.

To read the full report, visit FSAnet and look under "Library." (http://fsanet.ed.gov/library/flexiplace_aws.html)

Secretary Paige Visits UCP



COO Terri Shaw explains the complex diagrams representing FSA's systems integration strategy, known as "The Wall," to Secretary Rod Paige. Paige visited FSA's UCP offices on February 21 to congratulate staff for earning a clean audit.

We Help Put America Through School

In Case of Emergency

To be prepared in case of an emergency situation, COO Terri Shaw has appointed Jerry Schubert, acting CIO, to lead FSA's Crisis Management Team.

Jerry is spearheading two teams focused on different aspects of planning. The first is working on the kind of emergency planning designed to help protect staff safety.

Terri wrote in an e-mail to all FSA employees on February 14 that staff members' safety is the Department's top priority.

In a February 25 e-mail to staff in the nation's capital, she wrote, "I want to assure you that we are doing all that reasonably can be done."

The second team is planning for disaster recovery and business resumption. The team is reviewing FSA's continuity of operations procedures, in partnership with the Department's Office of Management, to determine if any enhancements need to be made.

An Emergency Preparedness area has been set up on FSANet. Safety and Security Contacts for our 10 regional offices are posted there, and the emergency planning team is working to ensure each office has building evacuation and other plans in place.

The site also features a link to the Department's Safety Updates and the Homeland Security Department's ready.gov Web site.

If you have questions, concerns or comments about emergency planning, you may e-mail FSA Communications.

Higher Education Act Reauthorization

On March 7, the Education Department held the first public hearing on reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) in Kansas City. The event, sponsored by OPE, was held in conjunction with the FSA Spring Conference.

Throughout the day, students, parents, financial aid professionals and other witnesses testified in panels on issues concerning postsecondary education. Those who did not have time to publicly testify submitted their written comments to the hearing board. The HEA Reauthorization Committee covered a range of topics: general institutional requirements, teacher preparation, recruitment and development, international education and graduate programs, aid for institutions, and student aid issues: outreach and support, grants, work study and loans.

In reauthorizing the HEA, the Education Department hopes to expand on the strong initiatives already in place while improving upon postsecondary education programs.

For more information about the hearing, visit the Department's Website (ed.gov) and look under OPE. (<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/reauthorization/>)

Terri Shaw Greets Regions



Schools Channel staff in Kansas City meet with COO Terri Shaw during the Spring Conference on March 5. Terri is scheduled to visit the Atlanta regional office on March 24, Boston on April 15, and New York City on April 16.

FSA Now

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FSA Now is a monthly newsletter for FSA staff available on FSANet. To share feedback or contribute ideas, e-mail FSA Communications.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

New Chief of Staff Announced

Deborah Price will become FSA's new chief of staff in mid-March. Tom Pestka, acting chief of staff, has been named the leader of the new Borrower Services unit in the proposed reorganization.

FSA Staff Named to Federal CIO Council Group

Harry Feely and Denise Hill have been named to the Federal CIO Council's Components Subcommittee. The government-wide team was put together to help federal agencies with the technical design of their initiatives and promote the principles of Component-Based Architecture and reuse of software products. The subcommittee meets weekly to ensure communication and integration across government. The information will be shared with OCIO and the Enterprise Architecture subcommittee.

Seattle Employees Honored

On February 3, Linda Burkhardt, Marianna Deeken and Julie Arthur received the "Friend of OASF AA" Award by the Oregon Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

FOIA and Privacy Act Processing Goes Electronic

FSA's Freedom of Information Act/Privacy Act Fulfillment Services will be one of three Department offices to test the new e-FOIA/PA Request Processing System. The trial of the new system is the first step towards making organizations capable of electronically performing a variety of FOIA/PA functions, from tracking and imaging to redaction and records management. FSA was chosen because, OCIO FOIA's office said, we operate the "best" FOIA/PA services within ED and we receive the largest volume of FOIA/PA requests in ED. OCR and OSERS will also participate in the pilot program. The new system is expected to be ready for testing in April. FSA's FOIA/PA staff consists of Candice Parrish, Crystal Sweet and Elise Cook.

EZ Testing

On March 5-6, the EZ Audit and Case Management Teams conducted User Acceptance Tests on the developing EZ Audit System. When EZ Audit debuts on April 1, schools will be allowed to submit their financial statements and compliance data online, ultimately replacing the manual system.

Program of Integrity: Spring Conference '03



FSA hosted 893 participants at the 2003 Spring Conference in Kansas City on March 5-7. The conference theme was Program Integrity. Dr. Malcolm Sparrow (right), author of License to Steal: How Fraud Bleeds America's Health Care System was the featured speaker. Most sessions focused on ways to strengthen Title IV program integrity. Dan Klock of Analysis (above left) delivered a presentation on Verification.



MyFSA

FSA Now sat down with Marianna O'Brien, who will head up Communications Management Services when the proposed FSA organization is approved.

Q: What are your personal or departmental goals at FSA?

A: I want to build on the considerable talent and communications vehicles we have in place so that the communications group provides timely, relevant, and meaningful information that helps our employees do their jobs better and our organization meet its performance goals.

Q: What do you most like about your job?

A: I am a staunch supporter of the student aid programs and I enjoy being part of the system that helps students get an education. I live in Washington DC and enjoy my commute... I am not missing the traffic on the beltway one bit!

Q: What do you do when you're not at work?

A: I am married, with an 11-year-old who enjoys a very active life.

Q: What has been your biggest challenge so far?

A: The biggest challenge is to be new to an organization and yet have a function that is very dependent on one's ability to quickly get the correct information from the right person in the organization. I'm still struggling with this, I'm afraid.

Q: What do you find most intriguing about FSA?

A: What amazes me is that the preferred communications tool is e-mail. That's been interesting for me to work through, and again as a new person to the organization, it is a challenge to build a relationship through e-mail.

Q: What did you do at your last job?

A: I was vice president and general manager for a small public relations firm. In that role, I learned the customer was the king.

Spotlight On....

Two Millionth FAFSA



This Award Year is setting new records for the online FAFSA.

First, on February 16, FSA received the one-millionth online FAFSA for 2003-2004. That's about three months earlier than last year.

Then, on March 4, we received our two-millionth online FAFSA. That's one month earlier than last year.

The online FAFSA was introduced in 1997 and its usage has grown steadily. In the not-yet-completed 2002-2003 cycle, the number of electronic applications is surpassing paper for the first time. In the 86-week cycle, for about every three online FAFSAs received, we receive only two paper applications (59% to 41%).

In the 2003-2004 cycle, for about every seven online applications received, we receive about three paper applications (68% to 32%).